



Episode 003

The Leaders' Convictions (Part 1)

Types of Convictions

Introduction

If we are to build great ministries, great churches, we need great convictions. But do we have the right convictions? Today I will address this whole area of convictions over Part 1 and Part 2.

A leader without conviction is like a well without water. Such people cannot truly lead because they have no anchor for what they believe in.

In God's Kingdom, He is seeking for leaders of deep conviction in order that they may lead God's people in God's ways. Unless they have deep convictions, they will not last the distance nor will they inspire followers to go the distance. If we try to build the church with leaders who lack the depth of conviction, the church will lack the convictions to fuel the highest passions to build the Kingdom of God right.

When we examine the churches that have made great impacts, it is usually led by leaders with great convictions. If we are to build great churches, a great movement, we need to have great convictions. Little convictions will not cut it. My challenge to you is to be a leader with deep biblical convictions.

It is crucial as leaders to understand the range of convictions that we may have. What are some of its characteristics? What can we do about it?



Variety of Convictions

Matthew 13:18-23 (NIV)

18 “Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: 19 When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path. 20 The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. 21 But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away. 22 The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful. 23 But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.”

Many apply this only for salvation. But fundamentally Jesus' focus was upon our heart response to God's Truth. It is really about convictions. I want to focus on 3 of the soil types.

1. Shallow Convictions - the seed on rocky soil (v20-21)

So who are those with shallow convictions? Let me suggest 2 main categories.

Borrowed Convictions

These are second-hand convictions. Convictions gained from others around us. Convictions that we did not work through ourselves but relied upon others.

The biggest issue is when we fail to recognise our convictions are borrowed. When there is no supporting structure, we collapse. I have seen many leaders, once they are no longer in a church with the right supporting leadership or pastoral structure, they fall apart.



Once they are no longer in a leadership role, they no longer share the convictions they used to talk about.

Rootless Convictions

Such convictions have no lasting roots. Unlike those with borrowed convictions, their conviction was not dependent on those around them. They had started to develop their own convictions. They got excited, stirred by ideas and passions they encountered. But those convictions are not sustained by the right values and perspectives.

In Sydney 2006, a road tunnel was under construction and a sinkhole formed. Parts of an apartment block of 26 units directly over it, collapsed into the hole. The rock between the tunnel and building did not have the strength to hold up the apartment because it had geological weaknesses in it.

King Saul was a man who had rootless convictions. When the crunch came, he became jelly. He could not stand up to the Philistines, to Goliath. For he lacked conviction in God the Deliverer. So, Jonathan and David came to his rescue instead.

What causes such shallowness?

Shallow Hearts

The heart is not in the right place to seek the deeper things of God. There is a hardness that one is not aware of. How do we know there is hardness? Ask yourself how hard God has to work on you to get convictions to develop. How many times do you reject or ignore what God is saying?

Shallow Understanding

The person is shallow in their understanding and therefore is shallow in convictions. They lack the necessary insight and revelation. They lack a solid framework in appreciating the things of God and this leads to shallowness of perspective and consequently the lack of convictions. For example: "Serve God because the Bible says so, because my church pastor says so."



A superficial approach rather than a more thoughtful “Serve God because our service is a worship, focussing us unto God and giving Him glory. Serving God humbles us and helps us mature and better attune to God Himself.”

Leaders with shallow convictions will falter or fall in those areas. Because there are no real roots to anchor in those areas. Part of the problem is they don't realise their shallowness.

Solutions:

1. Recognise the potential problem of shallowness, in your thinking, in your heart.
2. Challenge your shallowness by sitting down with pen and paper and write down reasons why you should develop certain convictions more deeply.
3. Allow your convictions to be tested/challenged and be aware of any lack, so that we may work to deepen our convictions.

2. Weak Convictions - seeds amongst weeds (v22)

These are convictions that become choked. Who are those with weak convictions?

Convenient Convictions

These follows the crowd since it is convenient. But once it is inconvenient, they weaken quickly. They become unproductive because they are unable to rise above the obstacles.

2 Timothy 4:10 (NIV)

for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia.



Demas sought comfort and convenience. Loving the world was his problem. Career, fame, security and so forth became more attractive than the mission given by God. Aaron the High Priests' convictions to follow God was based on convenience. When it was not, he compromised to the Israelites pressure. He lacked the necessary backbone of conviction.

Exodus 32:2-4 (NIV)

2 Aaron answered them, "Take off the gold earrings that your wives, your sons and your daughters are wearing, and bring them to me." 3 So all the people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron. 4 He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool. Then they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt."

It is always more convenient to compromise under pressure. It is always easier to jump onto the more attractive option. It is short-term gain with long-term problems. When we truly follow Jesus, we may not have a place to lay our heads as Jesus so aptly put. A greater conviction than a weak one is needed. Will we keep the same convictions when it is inconvenient? When it means we face opposition? When we lose benefits?

To plant a church in Brisbane was a tremendous cost to my career, my comfort and my security. I never wavered from my convictions because convenience and popularity were never a consideration. Pleasing God was my priority.

Double-minded Convictions

James 1:6-7 (NIV)

6 But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. 7 That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord;

This is someone who flip-flops. Who keeps changing their minds. Someone who cannot stand up to pressure. Easily crumbling under pressure. Someone who is easily diverted by other attractive inclinations. Judas was double-minded in his convictions. His underlying problem was self-centredness and greed. He could not maintain his convictions, his loyalty to Jesus because he was more concerned about himself and his wants.



Such a person cannot stay their course because they keep wavering. Leaders with convenient or double-minded convictions cannot be trusted to be pillars in God's house. Because they will collapse under pressure.

Solutions:

1. Start by pulling out the weeds in our hearts. Discern our ungodly motivations and desires.
2. Work out what should be your key values and learn to stick by your values and decisions. I sort out my values and convictions ahead of time. I even consider possible scenarios to work through my convictions. I determined to stick to principles and biblical values, rather than pragmatic, convenient solutions.

3. Solid convictions - seeds in good soil (v23)

These lead to fruitfulness in the areas of conviction because they invest into it and persevere to see fruits develop. Such leaders often inspire others and give them assurance due to their certainty about what they believe. Who are those with solid convictions?

Thoughtful Convictions

They have given careful thought about areas of concern to them. They develop necessary insight and understanding and grasp the implications involved. Then they decide to choose that route.

Typically, these have very solid convictions because they have adequately weighed up the principles, factors, possible outcomes as well as costs involved. Nehemiah pondered carefully over the need to rebuild Jerusalem and made the choice to return despite the obstacles he will face. He never wavered from it.

I am a similar sort of person. I normally consider carefully and prayerfully over significant decisions. This helps me to develop convictions over key areas and the decisions I make.



Costly Convictions

Solid convictions are undergirded by an awareness of the costs and the willingness to pay the price. Many of these develop convictions which they are willing to die for.

Luke 14:25-33 (NIV)

25 Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: 26 “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple. 27 And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple... 33 In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.

Paul in Acts 20:24 (NIV)

However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace.

At 23 years old, God challenged me to be willing to die for him. To live my life for Him. I sorted that out quite early. And deepened that conviction over the many years. What is the price we are willing to pay to keep our convictions?

God's challenge to us is – are we willing to die for Him and His Kingdom? If we are not willing, we are not yet truly a disciple! Are we willing to give up all? Our comfort, our dreams, our security, our rights, even our very lives?

How can we be a people of solid convictions?

Quick Tips:

1. Make sure our convictions are of biblical convictions. For we should not just have convictions but make sure it is biblically grounded.
2. When we read God's Word, when we do devotions – do we ask God about what convictions we should develop? Do we consider what other biblical principles it links to and hence increase the breadth and depth of our perspectives?



Conclusion

God is seeking for leaders with deeper convictions. Will we be good soil that allows godly, biblical convictions to grow solidly? When we are so, then God can begin to do great things in and through our lives. Then God can begin to build His church upon our shoulders.

Discussion Questions

These questions could be done personally or as part of a group discussion.

1. Can you identify one area in your life where you have shallow or weak conviction? If so, why do you think it is so?
2. How far do you think that solid convictions can develop because there have been careful thoughtful consideration about particular areas? Because there has been a willingness to pay the price after considering the costs? Discuss.
3. Why do you think that it is so important to develop convictions according to God's Word?



Actionable Steps

Following questions are to prompt us on suitable actions. Importantly, come up with steps you will take to make progress. Give them datelines and priority.

1. What specific actionable steps can you take deepen an area of shallow or weak convictions?
2. What specific actionable steps can you take to deepen your convictions according to God's Word?
3. What specific actionable steps can you take to develop deep convictions in areas that the Holy Spirit points to?





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